



REMARKS

BY

**THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR E. D. MNANGAGWA**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**RECEIVING AN HONOUR OF THE FREEDOM
OF THE CITY OF GWERU**

GWERU

31 MARCH 2023

Director of Ceremonies;

Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care,
Hon. Gen. (Rtd) Dr C. G. D. N. Chiwenga;

Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution,
Midlands Province, Hon. Sen. L. Mavima;

Minister of Local Government and Public Works,
Hon. J. G. Moyo;

Other Honourable Ministers here present;

His Worship the Mayor of Gweru, Councillor
H. Kombayi;

City of Gweru Councillors, and Councillors from other
local authorities here present;

Senior Government Officials;

Traditional Leaders here present;

Council Management and Employees here present;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my distinct honour to be addressing this gathering of the leadership and residents of Gweru, on the occasion to bestow me with the Freedom of the City of Gweru. Allow me to admit that when I was informed that I had been conferred with such an honour, I was humbled and pleasantly surprised by such a gesture from the City Fathers of Gweru. I want to thank you Mr Mayor, Your Worship, Councillor Hamutendi Kombayi and your fellow councillors for this recognition.

Given that Gweru City Council is made up of Councillors from different political parties, backgrounds and persuasions, this honour is an indication that the decision is apolitical. It is also a demonstration that our democracy is maturing and some political leaders across the political party divide, are able to act objectively for the broader national good. This is what it should be. We are all Zimbabwean, and this is our only home. Congratulations Gweru, through this act, you further attest to the fact that there is much more that unites us, no matter our Party preferences.

This is the spirit that should permeate throughout our country even as we gear up for the upcoming Harmonised General Elections. Let us remain united, preaching peace, love and harmony among our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I recall when I was growing up, during the time of the oppressive colonial administration, when this City was then called Gwelo, we were not privileged to work and move freely in towns and across the country as a whole. Following the protracted liberation struggle and the sacrifices made by the gallant sons and daughters of the soil, we regained our land and, ultimately attained independence, freedom and democracy as free men and women of Zimbabwe.

This honour, which has been bestowed on me is, thus, a tribute to the sacrifices of all the gallant sons and daughters who fought for our independence, to build peace, unity and ultimately the development of our great motherland, Zimbabwe.

Gweru is known as the City of Progress, as such, I urge you, Your Worship the Mayor and councillors, to ensure that this mantra is translated to realities on the ground. I am aware that various areas within the City need improvement. The delivery of quality water and sewer infrastructure; roads; ICTs; waste management and refuse collection; public lighting; as well as other critical services for our people must be scaled up.

As the provincial capital of Midlands Province, much is expected from the City Fathers. Gweru must indeed progress.

While I recognise the fact that not all challenges can be resolved in one day, all local authorities must, however, have clear development plans to enhance service delivery and foster incremental development. Sound corporate governance systems, integrity, honesty and orderliness are essential traits for those holding public

office in our local authorities and indeed across the political spectrum.

Furthermore, planning regulations and by-laws should be transformative in line with the changing socio-economic trends and demographics. As our society and cities expand, develop and modernise, it is incumbent upon our local authorities to provide adequate designated industrial zones, factory shells, market areas and stalls for emerging businesses and residents.

I also call upon the private sector to embark on various corporate social responsibility programmes for the benefit of their customers and the communities in which they operate in. The National Clean-up and Beautification Programmes should be taken seriously and see the ambience of Gweru improving. Resources must be allocated to activities such as planting trees and flowers as well as grass cutting along road sides and other public places.

The City of Gweru is home to the Midlands State University, Mkoba Teachers College and Gweru Polytechnic College, among other strategic national institutions. I urge you to leverage on the capabilities and competencies of these organisations as you implement the Smart City Concept and modernise the City. Information Communication Technologies and other contemporary strategies must be effectively deployed to accelerate the modernisation of the City. The talented young girls and boys at the innovation hubs and industrial parks should be tasked to come up with solutions which enhance service delivery.

I challenge local authorities to ride on my Government's engagement and re-engagement policy to establish partnerships and twinning arrangements that will leap frog governance systems within your Local Authorities. In the context of provincial economies, both rural and urban councils must equally attract investment towards the growth of provincial GDP.

Capital goes where it feels safe, hence, I challenge you to improve your ease of doing business environment in line with the national barometer and global best practices.

As you do so, always keep the residents continuously engaged and dialogue open, as opposed to restricting interactions with them during the budget formulation process. As we entrench democracy, participatory governance and private sector led development in our country, our people's voice must be heard, and their views taken on board.

Your Worship, Mayor Kombayi;

I have heard what you have said and I am glad to work with you, as the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. I want to assure you that the Second Republic remains available to exchange progressive ideas towards transforming our cities and the country as a whole. However, it is the local authorities who must live up to

their primary mandate of delivering responsive and people centred quality services at the community level.

In view of the evident shortcomings within local authorities to collect and prudently utilise resources of rate payers, my Government is in the process of availing financial resources for the improvement of water and sewer reticulation systems; rehabilitation and development of roads; ICTs; refuse removal and public lighting, among others. The welfare of the people of our great country remains paramount.

Meanwhile, it is encouraging that Devolution Funds availed under the Devolution and Decentralisation Programme have resulted in beneficial, people centred projects. Let us not tire and continue on this positive course so that all citizens across the country within both rural and urban local authorities, have access to reliable services.

Going forward, I have tasked the Ministers responsible for Local Government; Finance; the Public Service Commission and representatives from my Office, to continuously review our Inter-Governmental Fiscal Transfer model. Notwithstanding this, local authorities must be proactive and scale up efforts to collect revenue and prioritise implementation of programmes and projects. The resident and rate payer of Gweru deserves better and should see value for the rates, fees and charges that they pay.

‘Nyika inovakwa, inotongwa nevene vayo, Ilizwe lakhiwa libuswe ngabanikazi balo.’ There is no turning back. Zimbabwe shall be a prosperous and empowered upper middle-income economy by 2030; no one and no place will be left behind, including the City of Gweru.

With these remarks, allow me, Your Worship the Mayor, esteemed Councillors and indeed the entirety of the

Gweru community, to once again thank you for this honour of the conferment of the Freedom of the City of Gweru, which I am pleased to accept.

Thank you all. Ndinokutendai mose. Ngiyalibonga lonke.

God bless you.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.